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Comments of the CIA Chief of Station on a Recent Visit
to South Vietnam's Military Region 2

No American or Vietnamese I talked with during my 6-7 March visit to GVN MR 2 had any confidence that the cease-fire agreement would lead to permanent peace; none had the slightest hope that the Communists would live with the agreement; all of them expected a renewal of major unit warfare sooner or later (60 days to two years) and all of them expected that President Thieu would win an election with about 90 percent of the votes cast. In Phu Yen Province where the An Quang Buddhists are strong, it was emphasized that the An Quang hierarchy is critical of many Thieu policies but recognizes him as leader of the national opposition of Communism.

GVN MR 2 Commander General Toan, during dinner on 6 March, was very much preoccupied with the increased level of hostilities in western Pleiku Province, particularly the intensive rocketing of GVN positions straddling Route 19 west of Than An district town. Toan acknowledged the receipt of orders from President Thieu to minimize fighting but said these orders did not preclude self-defense. He claimed his positions were attacked and that on 7 March he would put air strikes on NVA positions from which the rockets were fired.

All in all, General Toan regards the implementation of the cease-fire to date as a farce which has put the GVN in a very difficult position. He was well aware of [redacted] continuing North Vietnamese troop and equipment movements southward. He felt that the NVA 320th Division was repeating its 1972 pattern of concentration in the highlands with the difference that then they were bombed and now they are permitted to move freely. By implication, at least, he was critical of the restraints imposed by the Americans on the GVN, while no similar limitations apply to the North Vietnamese.

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With respect to charges that GVN forces have ambushed PRG delegates to the Joint Military Commission on their way to pick up points, Toan explained his ground rules as follows: the GVN does not accept the designation of a pick up point in GVN-controlled areas. The PRG has claimed pick up points in areas which they do not control. "The fact that I can kill them," said Toan, "proves that the pick up point is not controlled by them. If they controlled the area, I could not kill them." Toan said that he most certainly would kill any VC who comes into a GVN-controlled area for reasons other than surrender. Clearly the spirit of national reconciliation has not yet arrived in MR 2.

GVN officials are feeling better about the ICCS. In Phan Thiet, Nha Trang and Ban Me Thuot the ICCS is well housed and fed and even entertained. In contrast, the NVA/VC compound in Phan Thiet, which was shown to me, can best be described as a concentration camp with beach privileges. NVA/VC delegates are kept in an absolute jail house atmosphere, on a sun-baked plateau at the edge of the airfield and next to a garbage dump. They are allowed to descend a steep bank to reach the beach, where they can enter the ocean on a front of 500 feet. In contrast, the ICCS moves freely and has casual daily social contact with Americans. In Ban Me Thuot, the PRG representatives never appeared. North Vietnam's delegates returned to Saigon after last week's demonstration against them. The ICCS in Darlac is left to its own devices. The province chief has not entertained them yet, but is planning sightseeing trips. The Phu Yen province chief in Tuy Hoa has organized several excursions for the ICCS including a fine picnic at Vungro Bay, where as if completely routine, a train chugged by several times in full view of the ICCS team. In fact, the train line has been idle for years and the locomotive and cars were reactivated solely for the purpose of impressing the ICCS that the railroad is operational. The Phu Yen ICCS team is based in Tuy An at a former Korean Fire Base instead of Tuy Hoa, which as province capital would be more logical. The explanation is that as with Phan Thiet, the VC expected to grab Tuy An and wanted the ICCS there to certify the claim, while they never

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had any hope of taking Tuy Hoa. As it happened, they did not get Tuy An either, but they tried.

A similar VC miscalculation also occurred in Ban Me Thuot where the VC occupied the important Rossi plantation on Route 14. They told plantation personnel that the ICCS would certify VC control over the area, and had a meeting room and chairs arranged for the ICCS team. However, by the time the latter arrived in Darlac Province, the GVN armored cavalry and regional forces chased out the VC. It appears that in several areas VC land grab operations were based on the assumption that the ICCS would appear on the scene promptly to certify control. The ICCS was slow in moving, however, because of North Vietnamese and VC tactics in the Four Party Commission. Thus we have another mystifying case of lack of coordination between the political and military efforts of the Communists.

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VIETNAMESE AFFAIRS STAFF
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Office of the Director of Central Intelligence

DATE: 8 March 1973

TO: Mr. Richard T. Kennedy
NSC Staff

FROM:

SUBJECT:

SAVA 73-6a

REMARKS:

The attached makes interesting
reading, which you may wish to pass
to HAK.



George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

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CITE SAIGON 61137 SECTION 1 OF 2

TO: DIRECTOR.

RYBAT

GAC JPH WAC WK

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JHW JJM JFR RAE

POO EKH MEE LCP

SUMMARY: ON 2 DAY VISIT TO MR-2, COS FOUND POLITICAL SITUATION
DSS KJS JES

WHOLLY IN THIEU'S FAVOR. MILITARY SITUATION IS SATISFACTORY AT
PRESENT BUT APPEARS QUITE OMINOUS^S FOR THE FUTURE UNLESS NORTH^{D F}
VIETNAM TURNED OFF HER PRESENT COURSE BY DIPLOMATIC MOVES.

CUMULATIVE EVIDENCE OF NVA/VC PREPARATIONS FOR ANOTHER ROUND
CANNOT BE OVERLOOKED. [] RELATIONS WITH AMERICAN AND
VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES ARE UNIFORMLY EXCELLENT. NEW CONSUL
GENERAL ENGEL MOST FRIENDLY AND COOPERATIVE. []

CONTACT HIGHLY TREASURED BY GVN OFFICIALS, INCLUDING CORPS
COMMANDER AND PROVINCE CHIEFS. THERE WERE NO IMMEDIATE
PERSONNEL PROBLEMS. FINDING QUALIFIED POICS WILL CONTINUE TO
BE DIFFICULT. LOSS OF ARMY-PROVIDED MOVIES MAY PRESENT MORALE
PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

1. ON 6 AND 7 MARCH COS VISITED PHAN THIET, NHA TRANG, TUY
HOA AND BAN ME THUOT, ALL IN MR-2, FOR PERSONAL ORIENTATION
AND DISCUSSIONS WITH BASE AND PROVINCE PERSONNEL. VIETNAMESE

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CONTACTS INCLUDED MAJOR GENERAL TOAN, COMMANDING GVN MR-2, AND PROVINCE CHIEF, NATIONAL POLICE CHIEF, MSS CHIEF AND SPECIAL BRANCH CHIEF, DARLAC PROVINCE.

2. HEALTH AND MORALE OF PERSONNEL EXCELLENT.

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DRAWDOWN OF U.S. MILITARY HAS NOT THUS FAR RESULTED IN LOGISTICS AND SECURITY PROBLEMS. SOME REDUCTION EXPERIENCED IN AVAILABILITY AMERICAN TYPE FOODS BECAUSE OF CLOSURE OF MILITARY COMMISSARY SYSTEMS, BUT WE WILL BE ABLE TO COMPENSATE FOR THIS BY PERIODIC AIR AND ROAD SHIPMENTS. OF GREATER CONCERN IS LOSS OF AMERICAN TELEVISION AND POSSIBLE LOSS OF AMERICAN MOVIES TILL NOW PROVIDED BY ARMY. PARTICULARLY IN PROVINCES THE MOVIES REPRESENTED ESSENTIAL ENTERTAINMENT AND WERE ALSO USED AS FOCAL POINT FOR DEVELOPING SOCIAL CONTACTS WITH VIETNAMESE. STATION WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT, IN CONJUNCTION WITH EMBASSY, TO MAINTAIN ARMED FORCES SPONSORED MOVIE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM.

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~~NO AMERICAN OR VIETNAMESE I TALKED WITH HAD ANY~~
 CONFIDENCE THAT ⁷⁶²CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT WOULD LEAD TO PERMANENT
 PEACE; NONE HAD ⁷⁶²SLIGHTEST HOPE THAT ⁷⁶²COMMUNISTS WOULD LIVE
 WITH ⁷⁶²AGREEMENT; ALL OF THEM EXPECTED ^hRENEWAL OF MAJOR

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UNIT WARFARE SOONER OR LATER (60 DAYS TO TWO YEARS) AND ALL
OF THEM EXPECTED THAT PRESIDENT THIEU WOULD WIN AN ELECTION

WITH ABOUT 90 PERCENT OF THE VOTES CAST. IN PHU YEN ^{Province} WHERE

AN QUANG BUDDHISTS ARE STRONG, IT WAS EMPHASIZED THAT ^{the} AN QUANG ^{hierarchy}

IS CRITICAL OF MANY THIEU POLICIES BUT RECOGNIZES HIM AS LEADER OF

^{the} NATIONAL OPPOSITION OF COMMUNISM.

^{GVN AR 2 Commander}

~~GVN~~ GENERAL TOAN, DURING DINNER ^{on} 6 MARCH, WAS VERY MUCH ^{preoccupied}

UNDER IMPRESSION OF ^{with the} INCREASED LEVEL OF HOSTILITIES IN WESTERN

PLEIKU PROVINCE, PARTICULARLY THE INTENSIVE ROCKETING OF

GVN POSITIONS STRADDLING ROUTE 19 WEST OF THAN AN DISTRICT

TOWN. TOAN ACKNOWLEDGED ^{the} RECEIPT OF ORDERS FROM PRESIDENT

THIEU TO MINIMIZE FIGHTING BUT SAID THESE ORDERS DID NOT

PRECLUDE SELF-DEFENSE. HE CLAIMED HIS POSITIONS WERE ATTACKED

AND THAT ON 7 MARCH HE WOULD PUT AIR STRIKES ON NVA POSITIONS

FROM WHICH ^{the} ROCKETS WERE FIRED.

^{the implementation of the} ALL IN ALL, GENERAL TOAN REGARDS ~~CEASE FIRE IMPLE-~~

~~MENTION~~ TO DATE AS ^a FARCE WHICH HAS PUT ^{the} GVN IN ^a VERY DIFFICULT

POSITION. HE WAS WELL AWARE OF CONTINUING

NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOP ^{movements} AND EQUIPMENT ^{moves} SOUTHWARD. HE

FELT THAT ^{the} NVA 320TH DIVISION WAS REPEATING ^{its} 1972 PATTERN OF

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CONCENTRATION IN ^{the} HIGHLANDS WITH ^{the} DIFFERENCE THAT THEN THEY WERE BOMBED AND NOW THEY ARE PERMITTED TO MOVE FREELY.

BY IMPLICATION, AT LEAST, HE WAS CRITICAL OF ^{the} RESTRAINTS IMPOSED BY ^{the} AMERICANS ON ^{the} GVN, WHILE NO SIMILAR LIMITATIONS APPLY TO ^{the} NORTH VIETNAMESE.

8. WITH RESPECT TO CHARGES THAT GVN FORCES HAVE AMBUSHED PRG DELEGATES TO ^{the} JOINT MILITARY COMMISSION ON THEIR WAY TO PICK UP POINT ^{5/} ^{the} TOAN EXPLAINED HIS GROUND RULES AS FOLLOWS: ^{the} GVN DOES NOT ACCEPT ^{the} DESIGNATION OF ^a PICK UP POINT IN GVN-CONTROLLED AREAS. ^{the} AGREEMENT SPECIFIES THAT PICK UP POINTS MUST BE IN PRG-CONTROLLED AREAS. ^{the} PRG HAS CLAIMED PICK UP POINTS IN AREAS WHICH THEY DO NOT CONTROL IN ^{an} OBVIOUS ATTEMPT TO CLAIM ^{the} PICK UP AS ^a PROOF OF CONTROL. "THE FACT THAT I CAN KILL THEM" SAID TOAN, "PROVES THAT ^{the} PICK UP POINT IS NOT CONTROLLED BY THEM. IF THEY CONTROLLED THE AREA, I COULD NOT KILL THEM". TOAN SAID THAT HE MOST CERTAINLY WOULD KILL ANY VC WHO COMES INTO GVN-CONTROLLED AREA FOR REASONS OTHER THAN SURRENDER. CLEARLY THE SPIRIT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION HAS NOT YET ARRIVED IN MR-2.

9. GVN OFFICIALS ARE FEELING BETTER ABOUT ^{the} ICCS. IN PHAN THIET, NHA TRANG AND BAN ME THUOT ^{the} ICCS IS WELL HOUSED AND FED

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AND EVEN ENTERTAINED. IN CONTRAST, ^{the} NVA/VC COMPOUND IN PHAN THIET, WHICH WAS SHOWN TO ^{me} ~~GOV~~ CAN BEST BE DESCRIBED AS A CONCENTRATION CAMP WITH BEACH PRIVILEGES. NVA/VC DELEGATES ARE KEPT IN AN ABSOLUTE JAIL HOUSE ATMOSPHERE, ON ^a SUN-BAKED PLATEAU AT ^{the} EDGE OF ^{the} AIRFIELD AND NEXT TO ^a GARBAGE DUMP. THEY ^{are} ALLOWED DESCEND ^a STEEP BANK TO REACH ^{the} BEACH, WHERE THEY CAN ENTER ^{the} OCEAN ON ABOUT 500 FEET ^{a front of} ~~WIDE FRONT~~. IN CONTRAST, ^{the} ICCS MOVES FREELY AND HAS CASUAL DAILY SOCIAL CONTACT WITH AMERICANS. IN BAN ME THUOT, ^{the} PRG REPRESENTATIVES NEVER APPEARED. NORTH VIETNAM DELEGATES RETURNED TO SAIGON AFTER LAST WEEK'S DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THEM. ^{the} ICCS IN DARLAC ^{is} LEFT TO OWN DEVICES. ^{The} A PROVINCE CHIEF HAS NOT ENTERTAINED THEM YET, BUT IS PLANNING SIGHTSEEING TRIPS. ^{The Phu Yen} TUY HOA PROVINCE CHIEF ^{is Tuy Hoa} HAS ORGANIZED SEVERAL EXCURSIONS FOR ^{the} ICCS INCLUDING ^a FINE PICNIC AT VUNGRO BAY, WHERE AS IF COMPLETELY ROUTINE, ^a TRAIN CHUGGED BY SEVERAL TIMES IN FULL VIEW OF ^{the} ICCS. ^{the} IN FACT, ^{the} TRAIN LINE ^{has been} IDLE FOR YEARS AND ^{the} LOCOMOTIVE AND CARS WERE REACTIVATED SOLELY FOR ^{the} A PURPOSE OF IMPRESSING ^{the} ICCS THAT ^{the} RAILROAD IS OPERATIONAL. ^{The} PHU YEN ICCS ^{team} IS BASED IN TUY AN AT ^{the} FORMER KOREAN FIRE BASE INSTEAD OF TUY HOA, WHICH AS PROVINCE CAPITAL WOULD BE MORE LOGICAL. ^{The} EXPLANATION

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IS THAT AS WITH PHAN THIET, ^{the} VC EXPECTED TO GRAB TUY AN AND WANTED ^{the} ICCS THERE TO CERTIFY THE CLAIM, WHILE THEY NEVER HAD HOPE OF TAKING TUY HOA. AS IT HAPPENED, THEY DID NOT GET TUY AN EITHER, BUT THEY TRIED.

^{occurred} 10. A SIMILAR VC MISCALCULATION ALSO IN BAN ME THUOT WHERE ^{the VC} ~~THEY~~ OCCUPIED ^{the} IMPORTANT ROSSI PLANTATION ON ROUTE 14. THEY TOLD PLANTATION PERSONNEL THAT ^{the} ICCS WOULD CERTIFY VC CONTROL OVER ^{the} AREA, AND HAD ^{the} MEETING ROOM AND CHAIRS ARRANGED FOR ^{the team} ICCS. HOWEVER, BY TIME ^{the} LATTER ARRIVED IN DARLAC PROVINCE, ^{the} GVN ARMORED CAVALRY AND REGIONAL FORCES CHASED OUT THE VC. IT APPEARS THAT IN SEVERAL AREAS ^{VC} LAND GRAB ^{operations were} WAS BASED ON ^{the} ASSUMPTION THAT ^{the} ICCS WOULD APPEAR ON ^{the} SCENE PROMPTLY TO CERTIFY CONTROL. ~~HOWEVER,~~ ^{however} ^{the} ICCS WAS SLOW IN MOVING ^{the} BECAUSE OF NORTH VIETNAMESE AND VC TACTICS IN ^{the} FOUR PARTY COMMISSION. THUS WE HAVE ANOTHER MYSTIFYING CASE OF LACK OF COORDINATION BETWEEN THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY EFFORTS OF THE COMMUNISTS. ~~E2 IMPDET.~~

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

SAVA 73-6


8 March 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Comments of the CIA Station Chief on
the Situation in South Vietnam's
Military Region 2

1. Attached are selected excerpts from a report prepared by our Chief of Station in Vietnam after he visited several locations in GVN MR 2 on 6 and 7 March. I am sending them to you because they contain some insights into the attitudes and mood of middle to high level GVN regional officials that you may find of value or interest.

2. We are sending these personal comments of our Chief of Station to you alone.


George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

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